

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 01337 281819Z
ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5879
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USCINCSO

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DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN
USCINCSO FOR J-2 AND PAO
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTIONS

FOLG SENT ACTION PRIORITY USINFO WASHDC INFO SECSTATE WASHDC
P R 281745Z FEB 78 FROM USIS/PANAMA RPTD YOUR ACTION/INFO

QUOTE
MEDIA REACTION

1. PANAMA CITY.--LOCAL RADIO AUDIENCES WERE TREATED TO ANOTHER
DAY OF LIVE BROADCASTS OF THE SENATE DEBATE FEBRUARY 27.
ARMED FORCES RADIO IN THE CANAL ZONE CONTINUED ITS LIVE RELAY
OF THE NPR COVERAGE WHILE THE OFFICIAL GOP STATION, RADIO
LIBERTAD, CARRIED A SPANISH VERSION OF THE PROCEEDINGS AS
TRANSLATED BY THE OAS LANGUAGE STAFF IN WASHINGTON.

2. ALL MORNING DAILIES FEBRUARY 28 CARRY THE USUAL UPI, EFZ
AND AP STORIES ON THE DEBATE. TREATMENT WAS STRAIGHTFORWARD.
FOR EXAMPLE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MATUTINO HEADLINED: "REJECT
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AMENDMENT AIMED AT MAINTAINING MILITARY BASES IN THE CANAL ZONE
AFTER 2000."

3-GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED CRITICA IS STILL REACTING TO THE DRUG
ISSUE WITH TWO COMMENTARIES FEBRUARY 28 IN DEFENSE OF PANAMA'S
SUCCESS IN DRUG TRAFFIC INTERDICTION. CRITICA'S LEAD EDIT, TAKEN
FROM LA REPUBLICA OF FEBRUARY 26, SAYS THAT THE SECRET SESSION IN

THE SENATE "REVEALS, CATEGORICALLY, THE GREAT CONCERN OF THE U.S. REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM OF THEIR NATION, DRUG TRAFFIC AND CONSUMPTION IN THEIR COUNTRY." TREATY OPPONENTS, ACCORDING TO THE CRITICA EDIT, ARE ATTEMPTING TO "MARRY" THE CANAL PROBLEM WITH THE GRAVE DRUG SITUATION IN THE U.S., A STRATEGY THAT WAS TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY WITH PRESIDENT REMON.

4-THE CRITICA EDIT CONCLUDES: "VERY SOON WHEN SENSIBILITY RETURN TO THE CAPITOL IN WASHINGTON AND THE PANAMA CANAL PROBLEM IS NOT 'MARRIED' TO THE DRUG PROBLEM IN THE U.S., THE U.S. LEADERS WILL BE ABLE TO PROVE AND CORROBORATE THAT IF THERE IS AN INTERNATIONAL PLOT AGAINST THE HEALTH OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, WE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF PANAMA ARE THE FORERUNNERS IN THE DEFENSE OF THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND OF ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD."

5-HARMODIO ICAZA IN HIS "MOYOLANDIA" COLUMN ON THE EDITORIAL PAGE OF GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MATUTINO FEBRUARY 28 AIRS HIS REACTION TO THE SENATE DEBATES. HIS OPINIONS CAN SAFELY BE SAID TO REPRESENT MODERATE PANAMANIAN THINKING ON THE ISSUE. ACCORDING TO ICAZA, WHO IS FOLLOWING THE DEBATES IN ENGLISH BUT ASSURES HIS READERS OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE SPANISH TRANSLATION, "WHILE IT IS TRUE AT THIS STAGE THAT ONE CAN DETECT A SLIGHT MAJORITY IN FAVOR OF RATIFICATION, IT WOULD BE INFANTILE TO UNDERESTIMATE THOSE OPPOSED TO THE TREATIES...(THE OPPOSITION'S FIGHT) IS TENACIOUS, ORGANIZED, WELL-CHANNELED AND RESOLUTE."
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6-"ONE GETS THE IMPRESSION," CONTINUES ICZAZ, "THAT EACH ORATOR HAS CHOSEN TO SPECIALIZE IN ONE TOPIC WITH QUOTATIONS, FIGURES AND DESCRIPTIONS WORTHY OF A BETTER CAUSE. EVEN WHEN THEY DISGUISE THE TRUTH, THE EXPOSITION IS SO BRILLIANT AND CONVINCING THAT IT COULD HAVE SOME EFFECT ON THE UNDECIDED... FOR EXAMPLE, IT CARRIES AN IMPACT TO SAY AND REPEAT THAT THE U.S. IS GIVING AWAY PART OF ITS TERRITORY WHERE IT HAS INVESTED MORE THAN NINE BILLIONS OF AMERICAN TAXPAYERS' MONEY. THIS REPEATED OVER AND OVER, EVEN WHEN IT IS FALACIOUS, HAS ITS EFFECT ON THOSE UNDECIDED SENATORS AND ON THE AMERICAN PUBLIC."

7-AFTER REFERRING BRIEFLY TO THE SECRET SESSIONS AND THE DELAYING AMENDMENTS AND OTHER TACTICS, ICAZA CONCLUDES: "IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY INTEND TO ACHIEVE REJECTION BY WEARINESS. IT'S LIKE A LITTLE CHILD WHO CRIES FOR SOMETHING AND HIS MOTHER SAYS: 'GIVE IT TO HIM SO HE'LL BE QUIET.' FROM NOW ON WE CAN EXPECT NOTHING BUT DILATORY TACTICS, AMENDMENTS, LONG AND TIRESOME SPEECHES AND MORE SECRET MEETINGS. WHAT MEANS DOES THE GOVERNMENT AND THOSE WHO FAVOR THE TREATIES HAVE TO COUNTERACT THE ABOVE? FRANKLY, I DON'T KNOW. BUT I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE MINORITY IN FAVOR OF REJECTION IS GOING TO BE HEARD FROM EVEN

MORE BEFORE FALLING IN DEFEAT TO THE MAJORITY OF VOTES." ITEM

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